

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SAIGON 04815 120517Z

12
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P 120340Z APR 75
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5190
INFO COMIPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
COMUSSAG NKP THAILAND PRIORITY
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

S E C R E T SAIGON 4815

EXDIS MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING TEL RECD FROM BIEN HOA APRIL 11 H/W REPEATED TO YOU.

QTE

S E C R E T BIEN HOA 296

EXDIS

FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS VS
SUBJ: MR3 COMMANDER ON CURRENT SITUATION

REF: BIEN HOA 295

1. AFTER I REVIEWED PRESIDENT FORD'S ADDRESS WITH GEN TOAN,
HE DISCUSSED BRIEFLY THE CURRENT SITUATION. HE WAS FRANK TO SAY
THAT THE SITUATION IS SERIOUS BUT FELT CONFIDENT THAT HE COULD
DEAL WITH THE IMMEDIATE THREAT IN LONG KHANH. HE CONFIRMED
THAT HE IS TAKING 2 ARMORED TASK FORCES AWAY FROM TAY NINH/HAU
NGHIA TO BRING THE ENTIRE 3RD ARMORED BRIGADE TOGETHER TO TRY
TO BREAK THE ROADBLOCK ON ROUTE 1 WEST OF XUAN LOC (REFTEL),
BUT HAD A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT VERSION OF THE COMBAT ASSAULT BY
THE AIRBORNE FROM THE SOUTH. HE SAID THAT SOME OR ALL OF THE
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AIRBORNE BRIGADE WOULD BE "DROPPED" INTO XUAN LOC CITY WHICH MUST

IN ANY EVENT HAVE REINFORCEMENTS, AND THAT FROM XUAN LOC THEY WOULD BE ATTACKING "IN SOME DIRECTION" (YET TO BE DETERMINED DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION). I ASKED IF HE HAS ANY EVIDENCE THAT THE NVA IS BRINGING NEW FORCES IN FROM NORTHERN LONG KHANH. HE SAID YES, BUT ONLY FROM ROUTE 20 DUE SOUTH OVERLAND TO XUAN LOC-- THERE IS NOT YET ANY EVIDENCE THAT NEW NVA TROOPS ARE MOVING ON ROUTE 20. TOAN SAID HE IS PUTTING MANY AIR STRIKES ON THE TROOPS MOVING ON XUAN LOC FROM THE NORTH. TOAN SAID FURTHER THAT (A) HE SEES NO LIKELIHOOD OF THE COMMUNIST FORCES BREAKING THROUGH HIS DEFENSES ON ROUTE 1 EAST OF BIEN HOA TO GET AT LONG BINH BASE AND THE BIEN HOA AREA, AND (B) THE NVA ARE NOT YET WITHIN ARTILLERY RANGE OF LONG BINH BASE -- "THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH ARTILLERY FOR THAT, THEY CAN'T BE EVERYWHERE AT ONCE."

2. I ASKED IF HE IS WORRIED ABOUT NVA ATTEMPTS TO CUT ROUTE 1 TO TAY NINH AFTER HE MOVES ALL OF HIS ARMOR TO LONG KHANH TODAY. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS IS A PROBLEM BUT SAID "I MUST DEAL WITH EACH PROBLEM AS IT ARISES AND BEAT THEM ALL ONE BY ONE." LATER HE SAID THAT IF HE COULD HURT THE NVA BADLY ENOUGH AT XUAN LOC HE WOULD BE ABLE TO MOVE SOME OF THE ARMOR BACK TO THE WEST.

3. DURING THE CONVERSATION TOAN INDICATED THAT ONE OF THE MOST OMINOUS PROSPECTS FOR THE COMING PERIOD IS THE PROBABLE DEPLOYMENT OF NORTH VIETNAMESE AIR IN THE SOUTH. HE SAID HE IS VERY CONCERNED THAT THE NORTH MAY SHORTLY BEGIN TO USE DANANG AND PLEIKU AIRFIELDS TO HIT TARGETS IN THE SOUTH.
PETERS UNQTE MARTIN

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SAIGON04815
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750127-1044
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750455/aaaabzeb.tel
Line Count: 89
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 BIEN HOA 295
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 JUL 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <20 NOV 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MR3 COMMANDER ON CURRENT SITUATION
TAGS: MOPS, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006